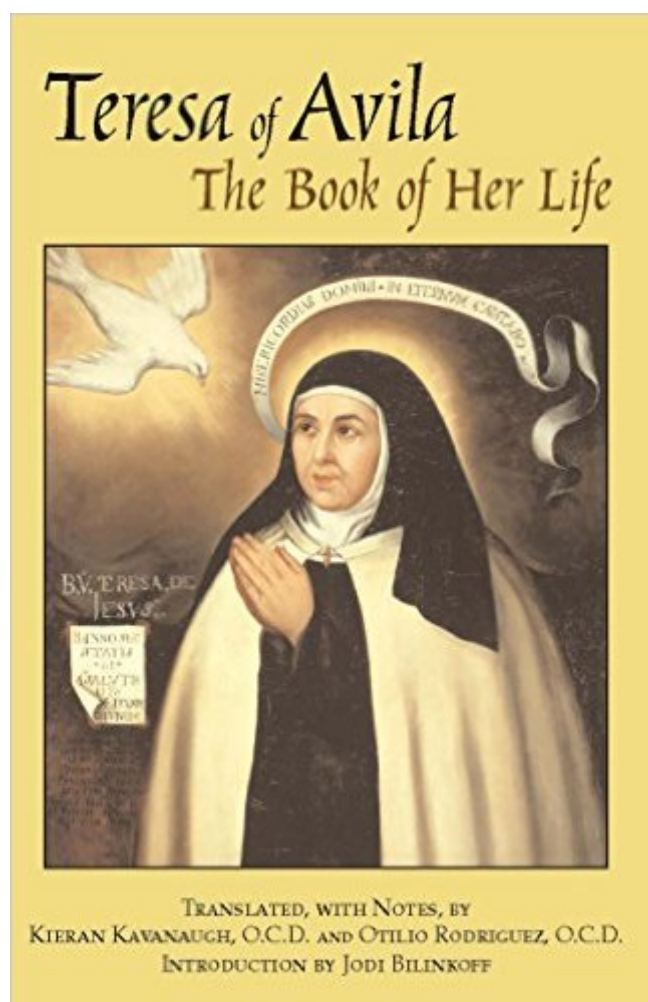


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# Teresa Of Avila: The Book Of Her Life



## Synopsis

The Hackett edition of Teresa of Avila's spiritual autobiography features Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez's authoritative translation of *The Book of Her Life* with a new Introduction by Jodi Bilinkoff that will prove especially valuable to students of Early Modern Spain, the history of Christian spirituality, and classic women writers. A map, chronology, and index are also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is basically theÂ The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1, minus two of her shorter works, the *Spiritual Testimonies* and the *Soliloquies*, produced by the same translators. What remains, therefore, is the story of the saint's life. We also can call this a great introduction to the saint's thought on prayer, which is found throughout her works. It's why she is called the "Doctor of Prayer." At the same time, it's hard to call this simply an introduction, when we find eleven chapters and over 60 pages describing one of Saint Teresa's primary doctrines on prayer, what is well-known as "Four Degrees of Prayer." From her own experience, Saint Teresa uses water to describe how we can form a relationship with the Lord through prayer, which she insists is the only way! With her sixteenth century mind, she speaks of four different ways a garden may be watered. 1) We can draw water--go to the well and lower the bucket. 2) We can build a mechanical device that will pump the water--she uses the idea of a waterwheel with buckets. 3) We can develop a method of providing automatic irrigation--fed by a stream or brook. 4) Lastly, it can rain, like the prophet says above! Likening our souls to a garden, and using the above examples, she shows by comparison that there are differing but advanced and superior methods of praying. Unless we are in the most

advanced stages of prayer, which is rare, Saint Teresa describes certain commitments that fall on us before we can claim the water we need for "our garden." For instance, beginners (and sometimes people at all levels) must be willing to go to the well and draw the water. Should we be unwilling, she speaks of our "ruin" even though Jesus has promised an abundance of "living water." This is her First Degree of Prayer, also called the "first water." Formally, it is known as Meditation. This is expected to supply and carry us to the next stage, called Mental Prayer. Lowering the bucket--Saint Teresa says "it is in these early stages that their labor is hardest ... and God grant there may be water in it! But that, at least, does not depend on us: our task is to draw it up." She calls us and teaches us to be recollected people, to train our minds to be "recollected." This is all preparation for advanced stages, so the Lord can do his work. Accordingly, for beginners in prayer, Saint Teresa tell us, that "this is a very laborious proceeding, for it will fatigue them to keep their senses recollected, which is a great labor because they have been accustomed to a life of distraction. Beginners must accustom themselves to pay no heed to what they see or hear, and they must practice doing this during hours of prayer; they must be alone and in their solitude think over their past life" and that all of them, whether beginners or proficients, must do this frequently. In hisÂ Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, #21 Pope Paul VI similarly advises Religious--easily beneficial to any of us--that in order that they "may more intimately and fruitfully participate in the most holy mystery of the Eucharist and the public prayer of the Church, and that their whole spiritual life may be nourished more abundantly, a larger place should be given to mental prayer instead of a multitude of prayers, retaining nevertheless the pious exercises commonly accepted in the Church and giving due care that the members are instructed diligently in leading a spiritual life." Given, there can be definite recognizable growth in prayer, there are likewise identifiable inclinations one may "experience" at prayer time, which point to this. This recognizable growth, which Saint Teresa's discourse is all about, can be summarized briefly from this point of view, as did Father Thomas Dubay in the following: 1) In Discursive Meditation, we find a "leading to" or "trying to" talk to the Lord inwardly. 2) Meditation and Mental Prayer: there is a "quest" in your prayer and you feel yourself "desiring" God, though you feel empty and dry. 3) You can be and are "aware" of God in a delightful way--not very long--a few minutes, and this can be coupled with distractions. Other signs are discernable at more advanced stages of prayer, usually called "Contemplation." Better to simply mention this here, so as to focus and grasp the above better. As an aside, Thomas Merton, inÂ *Seeds of Contemplation* 1ST Edition, chapter 19 on "Mental Prayer," orÂ *New Seeds of Contemplation*, he begins mentioning "Contemplation" as God work alone, but still we have to prepare for him to do it--all in agreement with Saint Teresa, and what she is describing here. While

we should not avoid learning her extensive treatise, if you can read Merton's valuable concise summary, it can be very practical introduction for any of us to begin to grasp the whole process.

TERESA OF AVILA: THE BOOK OF HER LIFE with notes, by Kieran, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. introduction by Jody Blinkoff, Hackett publishing company, Inc. 1995, 2008, 352

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Mary, Dylan and Jason. The four books above will give you a moving, convincing and impressive view of a woman's struggle to understand; herself, her place in the world and her relationship to God. She also had to balance what she said and wrote with the then current Spanish Inquisition. Her ability to juggle these many contradictions is impressive. Somehow it seemed to me that her pseudo-humility convinced the church to leave her in peace and to support her. St. John of the Cross was one of her many confidants, confessors and supporters. Teresa's family were Conversos. [...] . As Jews, they along with the Christians and the Muslims were considered people of the book and entitled to Islam's protection-provided they paid a tax. All three faiths lived in mutually respectful peace until the Spanish Reconquista of Iberia [...] . Ferdinand and Isabella gave the Jews the choice of being, converted, expelled or killed. But the Muslims that converted were allowed to live but were expelled. While I had considerable trouble seeing, feeling or understanding her incredible focus on prayer as a way to get to the core inner self and to God I did appreciate the sincerity and enormous struggle she went through. I don't quite understand but I have a vague feeling her concepts are valid and useful. Pope Francis resembles a worldlier and more externally focused Teresa. Frank

Words can not give this book justice. I highly recommend for anyone working towards a closer union with God.

To is just what I was looking for thanks

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